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August 1991

## The Probe, Issue 113 - August 1991

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# Relief Sought For Brown Tree Snake Problems by Multi-Agency Approach

Pamela J. Tinnin, *Special Correspondent for The Probe*

With the passage of the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-646, Section 1209), some long-sought relief to the brown tree snake problem in Guam and other Pacific islands may be near. The Act, approved November 29, 1990, is intended to prevent the unintentional introduction and dispersal of nonindigenous species into waters of the United States through ballast water and other vectors.

The Prevention and Control Act established a multi-agency task force co-chaired by the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. Other designated members are the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, as well as the Administrator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

The brown tree snake (*Boiga irregularis*) has created serious problems in the Pacific Ocean islands, especially in Guam, where the situation is critical. The species probably arrived in Guam during World War II, transported from the Solomon Islands secreted in Army cargoes. Lacking any natural enemies, the snakes thrived and, in the years since their arrival, they have decimated the native bird populations.

At least nine native bird species have disappeared and several others are approaching dangerously low numbers. Before the arrival of the brown tree snakes, there were no bird predators of any kind on Guam. The bird population had never acquired natural defenses; they did not squawk or even attempt to fly away upon seeing a snake.

While birds are the snake's most common prey, other native species such as lizards and bats are vulnerable, as well as household pets, especially puppies and kittens. The snakes can be quite aggressive and will invade residences and business structures in search of food and hiding places.

According to a brochure from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, adult brown tree snakes can reach lengths of eight feet and weigh as much as five pounds. The snake is mildly poisonous, chewing its prey to inject the venom. It holds its prey by wrapping its body around the animal. Although there is little danger to adult humans, there is some concern that if attacked, small children might suffer strangulation or poisoning. In the August issue of *Smithsonian*, S. Dillon Ripley reported that "one

Guam hospital treated 50 bite victims in a single year, many of them small children...."

There is a possibility that the snake is expanding its territory into Hawaii as well. Historically snake-free, it is feared that Hawaii may now be home to brown tree snakes. According to an article in the March 17 *Washington Post*, there have been unconfirmed sightings on Kauai and naturalists are concerned that the snakes may have already established themselves there.

Government officials in Guam and Hawaii are pressing for stronger measures to control the current snake population on Guam and prevent its movement to other areas. "From our standpoint on Guam, we can understand the need to study it, but the darn thing is proliferating faster than we can keep up," said Guam's Congressional Delegate Ben Blaz in a recent interview.

Hawaii senators Daniel Inouye and Daniel Akaka and Representative Patsy Mink have called for tougher inspections of cargo planes from Guam. "We cannot afford to expose Hawaii's native birds and wildlife to such a great risk," said Akaka. Senator Akaka has also introduced legislation (S. 1171) "to require the Secretary of Agriculture to take action to prevent the inadvertent introduction of brown tree snakes into Hawaii from Guam...."

APHIS has recently become involved in the brown tree snake problem. Fumigants for cargo and toxicants for population reduction are currently being developed at the Denver Wildlife Research Center. The Hawaii Department of Agriculture has contracted with APHIS for training snake-detecting dogs to use in their port.

According to Bobby R. Acord, Deputy Administrator of APHIS, ADC has proposed a pilot program which will involve trapping, toxicants, and detector dogs to control snakes in and around air and sea shipping facilities in Guam. If those efforts prove successful, they will also be used to reduce snake populations in critical habitat areas for endangered species.

If a pilot control program is funded by Congress, APHIS will begin to involve other agencies and organizations in a cooperative effort. As the Federal Agency responsible for wildlife damage control, APHIS will coordinate control efforts with all other agencies concerned in the brown tree snake issue.

*The author wishes to express her appreciation to Mark Collinge, USDA/APHIS/ADC, Washington, D.C., for his assistance in providing information.*



# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**September 18-20, 1991: Livestock/Big Game Symposium**, Ascauga's Nugget Hotel, Sparks, Nevada. This symposium to seek common ground between livestock and wildlife interests on western rangeland resulted from a review of livestock/big game conflicts on national forests. A 1990 review uncovered a critical need to improve communication and understanding on the relationship between big game and livestock that share common habitat. The symposium will provide greater in-depth analysis and discussion of the topic for ranchers, biologists, administrators, conservation groups, and livestock organizations. For more information contact Rick Forsman, Ochoco National Forest, Box 490, Prineville, Oregon 97754, (503) 447-9523. To register, write to the Livestock Big Game Symposium, c/o Nevada Cattlemen's Association, 419 Railroad Street, Elko, Nevada 89801.

**October 6-9, 1991: 5th Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference**, Sheraton Inn & Conference Center, Ithaca, New York. Technical sessions include: Wildlife Problems in Suburban Landscapes; Wildlife Problems in Agriculture; Wildlife Problems in Forestry; Health and Safety Issues; Economic, Social and Political Concerns; and New Techniques and Programs. Contact: Carol Rundle, Cornell Coop. Extension, Dept. of Nat. Resources, Rm. 108 Fernow Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY 14853-3001.

*ATTN: NADCA will have the following activities in conjunction with the 5th Eastern Conference:*

**NADCA Directors' Meeting**  
Monday, October 7, 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

**NADCA Membership Meeting**  
Tuesday, October 8, 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

**NADCA Hospitality Room**  
Tuesday, October 8, 5 - 5:30 p.m.  
Featuring New York State Wines & Cheeses  
*NADCA Members & Their Guests Invited*

**February 24-28, 1992: Ninth International Bear Conference**, Missoula Montana. For further information, contact L. Jack Lyon, Intermountain Research Station, P.O. Box 8089, Missoula, MT, 69807, phone (406) 329-3485.

**March 2-5, 1992: 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference**, Hyatt Newporter, Newport Beach, California. Contact: Dr. Terrell Salmon, Business Manager, c/o DANR-North Region, University of California, Davis, CA 95616-8575, (916) 757-8623; FAX (916) 757-8817.

*The Probe* is the newsletter of the National Animal Damage Control Association, published 10 times per year.

**Editors: Robert H. Schmidt and Robert M. Timm**  
**Editorial Assistant: Pamela J. Tinnin**

Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome. Please send news clippings, new techniques, publications, and meeting notices to *The Probe*, c/o Hopland Field Station, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449. If you prefer to FAX material, our FAX number is (707) 744-1040. The deadline for submitting material is the 15th of each month.

**March 27-April 1, 1992: 57th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference**, Radisson Plaza Hotel Charlotte and Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina. Contact: L.L. Williamson, Wildlife Management Institute, 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 725, Washington, D.C. 20005. Two of the sessions at the conference will be "Wildlife Damage Management" and "Biological Diversity in Wildlife Management". For more information about the "Wildlife Damage Management" session, contact co-chair John P. Weigand, Fish, Wildlife and Parks Bldg., Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717-0322.

**September 13-16, 1992: International Conference on Avian Interactions with Utility Structures**. Will focus on avian interactions with powerlines, towers, buildings, and aircraft. Contact: Ed Colson, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, 3400 Crow Canyon Road, San Ramon, CA 94853.

## Publications Available

Reprints of the article *Key Word Standardization in Vertebrate Pest Control* by authors R.M. Timm, T.P. Salmon, and R. H. Schmidt are available. The paper was originally published in *Vertebrate Pest Control and Management Materials: 5th Volume*, ASTM STP 974, S. A. Shumake and R. W. Bullard, Eds., American Society of Testing and Materials, Philadelphia, 1987, pp. 3-11. Write to: Hopland Field Station, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.

The newly revised *Miscellaneous Chemicals Book III: Nematicides, Growth Regulators, Rodenticides, Pheromones, Repellents, etc.* by W. T. Thomson is now available. This book describes in detail the above chemicals as used in the world today. Experimental materials are included to keep you up-to-date on new developments in the disease control field. The cost is \$16.50 and the book is available from Thomson Publications, P.O. Box 9335, Fresno, CA 93791.

## Galen Oderkirk, 40-year ADC Veteran, Dead at 90

Galen Oderkirk, a retired ADC State Director, died at his home in Lafayette, Indiana, on June 19. Galen served ADC for over 40 years, many of them as State Director for an 8-state area, including Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. He ran an active program throughout his eight states and became an ADC legend in the Midwest. He is survived by his wife, Ida. Friends may send sympathy cards to Ida Oderkirk, 902 Vine Street, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907.

# — *Animal Damage Control in the News* —

## **US FISH & WILDLIFE PROPOSES RECLASSIFICATION OF ELEPHANTS**

A proposed rule to reclassify the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) under the Endangered Species Act from Threatened to the more critical category of Endangered was published March 18 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. According to the *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, Vol. XVI, No. 4 (1991), if the rule is approved as proposed, it will apply to all populations except those in Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, where the species will retain its current classification of Threatened.

African elephant numbers are believed to have fallen more than 50 percent over the past decade, and the rate of loss continues at about 8 percent per year. In 1979, the total elephant population in Africa was approximately 1.3 million, but it is estimated that fewer than 600,000 remain. The intensive illegal killing of elephants to supply the ivory market is the most immediate threat. Over the long term, however, the species also faces habitat destruction and fragmentation due to agricultural development, urbanization, and desertification.

## **CANADIAN TRAPPERS ELECT NEW PRESIDENT**

Darline Richardson was elected president of the Canadian Trappers Federation at their recent annual meeting in Fredericton, New Brunswick. "As trappers, we are totally committed to upholding the principles of intelligent wildlife management, trapper education and humane trap research," noted Richardson. "It is our intention to see the Federation take an increasingly active role in informing the general public of the role of the trapper." A certified trapper herself, Darline Richardson is the manager of the Yukon Trappers Association. Also elected to the board were vice-president Bill Russell, president of the Ontario Trappers Association, and secretary-treasurer Barbara Brown, president of the British Columbia Trappers Association.

## **ECC MINISTERS AFFIRM FUR BAN**

According to the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community reached an agreement to ban the importation of wild furs from countries which still allow the use of the steel-jawed leghold trap. The ban goes into effect January 1, 1995 with a possible one-year grace period for producer countries. No exceptions will be granted for pest or predator control. A formal vote to ratify the agreement will occur in October or sooner. Thirteen species are covered by the ban: badger, beaver, bobcat, coyote, ermine, fisher, lynx, marten, muskrat, otter, raccoon, sable and wolf.

*The editors of The Probe thank contributors to this issue: Ron Thompson, Bill Fitzwater, James Forbes, and Wes Jones. Send your contributions to The Probe, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*

## **FORBES URGES ACTION ON STEEL JAW LEGHOLD TRAP PROHIBITION ACT, S 1259**

James E. Forbes, Regional Director for NADCA Region, 7, urges all NADCA members to write their congresspeople and senators opposing S 1259, "The Steel Jaw Leghold Trap Prohibition Act" introduced by Senators Akaka, Inouye, Cranston and Pell. According to Forbes, the bill would make it illegal for anyone to use, carry or even sell traps or the fur of any animal taken by such a trap.

## **ADC CONTROLLING GULLS; ENDANGERED TERNS RETURNING**

As a result of a cooperative agreement with the Massachusetts Division of Wildlife, ADC is controlling gulls on a two-acre island off the coast of Massachusetts in an attempt to encourage endangered roseate terns to recolonize. According to the APHIS Weekly Report of July 15, the island was formerly used by terns to nest, but gulls have taken over and displaced the terns. As a result of ADC control using Compound DRC-1339, the number of gull nests is down 60 percent, and terns again are showing an interest in nesting on the island.

## **COYOTES NO MATCH FOR DONKEY**

An article in the July 7 *Albuquerque Journal* reported that "McGovern", a 6-year-old donkey, has proven his worth against coyotes for Vermillion, Alberta rancher, Bliss Dickson. "I'm not saying it works 100 percent," Dickson said, "but I've had no losses at all since I've had him. That's over a year now." The donkey is part of a government experiment in coyote control. John Bourne, the Agriculture Ministry's regional supervisor for problem wildlife, said "Donkeys have an innate dislike for members of the dog species...so we're taking a close look at guard donkeys."

## ***NADCA Contest Deadlines Extended***

The NADCA Executive Board, during their conference call on July 8, decided to extend the deadline for the Membership Contest (see last page) until March 1992. This was done in part because of postal service delays in receiving the *Probe*, particularly for East Coast members. The extension assures that Easterners will not be at a disadvantage in this contest. Similarly, the NADCA Logo Contest (see *Probe* #111, June, page 6) also has been extended to March 1992.

# New ADC Products Available

## ELECTRONIC GUARD USED TO PROTECT SHEEP

The Electronic Guard (formerly known as the Siren Strobe Device), which has been tested as a protective device against sheep predation, is now available. Developed and tested by the Denver Wildlife Research Center, the Electronic Guard (EG) has proven useful for reducing coyote depredation on pastured and range sheep. According to an announcement from the US DA/APHIS/ADC Pocatello Supply Depot, Pocatello, Idaho, although there is no claim that the EG will be 100 percent effective in stopping coyote predation, it has proven to slow down predation. The Pocatello Supply Depot recommends that the EG only be used during times when predation is a problem. Prolonged use when coyotes are not a problem could result in coyotes learning to ignore the EG. A series of tests in three states reduced coyote predation an average of about 80 percent. At this time, there is no research regarding use of EGs with other animals or birds.

Price is \$225.00 including a disposable battery. For more information contact C. Joe Packham, Manager, USDA/APHIS/ADC, Pocatello Supply Depot, 238 East Dillon, Pocatello, ID 83201



*The Electronic Guard (formerly known as the Siren Strobe Device)*

## "SCAREY MAN FALL-GUY" NOW AVAILABLE IN THE UNITED STATES

"Scarey Man Fall-Guy", an electronically controlled predator scaring device, is now available in the United States. Manufactured in England since 1984, "Scarey Man" incorporates surprise, human effigy, sound, illumination, and movement. A bright orange mannequin pops up while a siren screams and a light inside flashes. The mannequin bobs up and down at the same time.

The operator can vary the "fright sequence" by merely setting three dials. The first dial selects daylight, dark, or 24-hour operation. A second dial determines the interval of display, from as frequently as every minute to as seldom as every 30 minutes. The third adjustment sets the duration of display, from one to thirty seconds. Once the battery is attached, the mannequin placed over the control box, and the power turned on, Scarey Man operates unattended.

Three models are available ranging in price from \$505.00 to \$645.00. For more information, contact Robert Royal, P.O. Box 108, Midnight, MS 39115.



*"Scarey Man Fall-Guy" electronic predator scaring device.*



# MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE CONTEST

## Strengthen NADCA and win two ways!

**THE PRIZE**—A handsome 12-gauge automatic shotgun, Remington Model 11-87 Special Purpose, with ventilated rib and choke tubes. New for 1991 at a Suggested Retail Price of \$605! Shipped to a USA address.

**CURRENT MEMBERS** — The rules are simple — pass this two-sided page on to a person you believe should be a member of NADCA. If they submit a paid membership application using this page, your name will be placed in a group from which one name will be drawn for the prize. Two-page or double-sided photocopies are legal for multiple entries; the more you hand out, the more chances for you to win. The determining factor for members — check the expiration date on the mailing label on the reverse. If it isn't the current month or later, you better get out that checkbook pronto!

**NEW MEMBERS** — You have a chance to win a prize also; in fact, you have two chances if you sign up early! If your membership application is the one drawn for the grand prize above, you will be refunded the amount you paid for membership. Your second chance? New members signing up before the next mailing of this newsletter will then be "Current Members" as above, and will also be competing for the Grand Prize by recruiting additional members.

**CLOSING DATE** — The contest will close on March 2, 1992. The drawing will be at an open meeting at the 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference, Newport Beach, California.



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### Membership Application

### NATIONAL ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Mail to: Wes Jones, Treasurer, Route 1 Box 37, Shell Lake, WI 54871

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Dues \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$: \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Underline: Student \$7.50, Active \$15, Sponsor \$30, Patron \$100)

Check or Money Order payable to NADCA

Select one type of occupation or principal interest:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                | <input type="checkbox"/> Pest Control Operator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> USDA - APHIS - ADC         | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal - other than APHIS | <input type="checkbox"/> State Agency          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Trapper               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADC Equipment/Supplies     | <input type="checkbox"/> University            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____     |  |